



House of Representatives

File No. 663

General Assembly

February Session, 2010

(Reprint of File No. 324)

Substitute House Bill No. 5360
As Amended by House Amendment
Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner
April 28, 2010

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN IN THE RECESSION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Child Poverty and
2 Prevention Council, established pursuant to section 4-67x of the
3 general statutes, shall constitute the children in the recession
4 leadership team to make recommendations for the state's emergency
5 response to children affected by the recession. The council may
6 establish a subcommittee to act for it under this section. For purposes
7 of this section, the council or a subcommittee established under this
8 subsection shall meet quarterly if the unemployment rate of the state,
9 as reported by the Labor Commissioner, is eight per cent or greater for
10 the preceding three months.

11 (b) The council shall work in consultation with other government
12 agencies to develop and promote policies, practices and procedures,
13 within available appropriations, that (1) mitigate the long-term impact
14 of economic recessions on children; (2) provide appropriate assistance
15 and resources to families to minimize the number of children who

16 enter poverty as a result of the recession; and (3) reduce human and
17 fiscal costs of recessions, including foreclosures, child hunger, family
18 violence, school failure, youth runaways, homelessness, child abuse
19 and neglect.

20 (c) For purposes of this section, the council, within available
21 appropriations, shall utilize strategies to mitigate the impact of the
22 recession on children that include, but are not limited to, the following:
23 (1) Resource information sharing and strategic planning to address
24 emergency response to children in the recession; (2) training of
25 pertinent personnel on the availability of services, access points and
26 interventions across agencies, including child trauma treatment; (3)
27 development of linkages between job training and education programs
28 and services; (4) development and implementation of efforts to
29 coordinate outreach and improve access to services, including the
30 establishment of multiple enrollment sites where feasible; (5) reduction
31 of current response times to clients for safety net programs, including,
32 but not limited to, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
33 Program, the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women,
34 Infants and Children, the National School Lunch Program and other
35 federal child nutrition programs, the temporary family assistance
36 program, the child care subsidy program, heating and rental
37 assistance, eviction prevention services and free and reduced
38 preschool meal programs; (6) identification of appropriate revisions to
39 regulations and procedures to be streamlined to increase program
40 access; (7) maximization of availability of targeted case management
41 and intervention services; (8) assessment of the unique needs of
42 children of soldiers serving or returning from war or other military
43 service; and (9) maximization of all federal funding opportunities.

44 (d) Not later than January 1, 2011, the council shall prepare a report
45 on (1) the progress in implementing the provisions of this section; and
46 (2) other government actions taken to reduce the impact of the
47 recession on children and families. Such report shall be submitted to
48 the select committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
49 matters relating to children and to the joint standing committees of the

50 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to
51 appropriations and the budgets of state agencies and human services.

52 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social
53 Services, in consultation with the Labor Department and the
54 Departments of Education, Public Health and Children and Families,
55 shall seek, within available appropriations, to promote efficiency,
56 reduce costs and administrative error rates and simplify the
57 application process for families eligible for benefits by streamlining
58 and integrating public information and access to programs.

59 (b) For the purpose of subsection (a) of this section, the Department
60 of Social Services shall develop, within available appropriations, a plan
61 for a comprehensive state service approach that may include (1) the
62 development and promotion of a single, simplified, on-line application
63 and enrollment process for programs administered by the Department
64 of Social Services that serve children or families; (2) the use of the
65 Internet to develop and increase public access to on-line screening
66 tools, benefit calculators and on-line applications that facilitate prompt
67 access to programs administered by the Department of Social Services
68 and benefit information; and (3) the promotion of access to direct
69 assistance with application and enrollment processes through
70 community-based organizations. Not later than January 31, 2011, the
71 department shall submit the plan to the joint standing committee of the
72 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human
73 services and to the select committee of the General Assembly having
74 cognizance of matters relating to children. The department may
75 consult with and accept donations from philanthropic organizations to
76 accomplish the purposes of this section.

77 (c) The Department of Social Services shall develop, in accordance
78 with the provisions of federal law, a client-friendly application process
79 which shall not require applications to be resubmitted if a family
80 applied for services and, not more than thirty days after the date the
81 application was submitted, the family experienced a change in
82 circumstances or the program closed to intake applications and then

83 reopened.

84 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Social
85 Services shall provide timely public notice if, for any reason, the child
86 care subsidy program closes intake. The department shall notify the
87 public if the program eligibility or status has been altered. Any change
88 in eligibility or program terms, except opening of the program or
89 expansion in eligibility, shall be effective not less than thirty days after
90 public notice of such change.

91 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social
92 Services, in consultation with appropriate state agencies and within
93 available appropriations, shall (1) allocate existing funding and
94 resources to ensure the availability of homeless shelters that accept
95 intact families or that assist families to find adequate alternative
96 arrangements that allow the family to remain together; (2) review
97 program eligibility requirements and other policies to ensure that
98 unaccompanied homeless children have access, to the fullest extent
99 practicable, to critical services that such children might otherwise have
100 been prevented from receiving due to age or guardianship
101 requirements; and (3) work, in accordance with state and federal law,
102 to seek relief from income garnishment orders through the appropriate
103 judicial authority if it is deemed appropriate to be in the best interests
104 of children and families.

105 (b) The Department of Education, in consultation with appropriate
106 departments, shall seek full utilization of the federal McKinney-Vento
107 Homeless Assistance Act to protect children falling into homelessness
108 from school failure and dropping out of school and to improve access
109 to higher education.

110 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Departments of Social
111 Services, Public Health and Education shall collaborate to decrease
112 hunger resulting from the recession by coordinating, within available
113 appropriations, state-wide public access, information and outreach,
114 and promoting, within available appropriations, cross-referral and

115 collocation of entry points and application processes for the federal
116 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, child nutrition programs
117 and the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women,
118 Infants and Children and increase federal reimbursements.

119 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2010*) (a) The Department of
120 Education shall administer, within available appropriations, a child
121 nutrition outreach program to increase (1) participation in the federal
122 School Breakfast Program, federal Summer Food Service Program and
123 federal Child and Adult Care Food Program; and (2) federal
124 reimbursement for such programs.

125 (b) The child nutrition outreach program shall:

126 (1) Encourage schools to (A) participate in the federal School
127 Breakfast Program; (B) employ innovative breakfast service methods
128 where students eat their breakfast in their classrooms or elsewhere
129 after school starts, rather than only before school and only in the
130 cafeteria; and (C) apply to the in-classroom breakfast grant program
131 pursuant to section 10-215g of the general statutes;

132 (2) (A) Encourage local and regional school districts to sponsor
133 Summer Food Service Program sites; (B) recruit other sponsors of such
134 sites; and (C) make grants to site sponsors to assist them in increasing
135 child participation;

136 (3) Encourage day care centers to participate in the Child and Adult
137 Care Food Program; and

138 (4) Publicize the availability of federally-funded child nutrition
139 programs throughout the state.

140 Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social
141 Services shall maximize federal fund opportunities from the
142 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund
143 established pursuant to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
144 P.L. 111-5, in order to assist families facing unemployment, housing

145 crises, increasing debt, homelessness or other hardships. The
146 department shall seek to utilize, in accordance with the provisions of
147 federal law:

148 (1) The nonrecurrent, short-term benefits category of the Temporary
149 Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund for eligible purposes,
150 including, but not limited to, housing, transportation, work expenses,
151 family safety, low birth weight reduction, food and nutrition. The
152 benefits funded pursuant to this subdivision may include, but not be
153 limited to, mortgage assistance, eviction relief, car repair, work clothes,
154 domestic violence services, home visitation and on-the-job training;
155 and

156 (2) The subsidized employment category of the Temporary
157 Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund for eligible purposes,
158 including, but not limited to, youth employment programs and the
159 alleviation of specific labor shortages and state worker shortages
160 where the jobs created help families apply for state services.

161 (b) The department shall work with the private sector, including
162 philanthropic, business and nonprofit agencies as well as any
163 consortium of such groups, for eligible purposes and as third-party
164 participants to qualify for, access and maximize federal funding from
165 said emergency fund through donation, in-kind spending and training
166 of subsidized workers.

167 (c) The department shall implement the provisions of this section
168 within available resources.

169 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not more than sixty days after
170 the effective date of this section, the Department of Social Services,
171 within available appropriations and to the extent permitted by federal
172 law, shall establish and implement a procedure for the following
173 modification in the temporary assistance of needy families program
174 whenever the state unemployment rate, as reported by the Labor
175 Commissioner, is eight per cent or greater for the preceding three
176 months. The Jobs First program shall permit and encourage parents to

177 pursue education and training and shall approve, as work activities,
178 two-and four-year degree programs. A recipient shall be eligible for
179 assistance under this modification for at least six months even if the
180 state unemployment rate for subsequent quarters is not eight per cent
181 or greater. The department may seek federal support to pay for such
182 modifications through funds provided from the federal Temporary
183 Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund.

184 Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Public
185 Health, within available appropriations and in consultation with the
186 Departments of Social Services and Education, shall seek to reduce the
187 incidence of low birth weight among infants and reduce the cost to the
188 state from unnecessary hospitalizations of such infants by (1)
189 maximizing coenrollment in the federal Special Supplemental Food
190 Program for Women, Infants and Children and Medicaid for all
191 eligible women; (2) encouraging tobacco cessation programs targeted
192 to pregnant women; and (3) promoting the use of the centering
193 pregnancy model of prenatal care. The department may recover the
194 costs of implementing the provisions of this section through funds
195 available from the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund established under
196 section 4-28f of the general statutes and the federal Temporary
197 Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund.

198 Sec. 10. (*Effective from passage*) The Commission on Children, in
199 consultation with the private sector, shall research the viability of
200 enacting a state children and the recession fund that would provide
201 funds and low-interest loans to families facing short-term crisis in
202 housing, utilities, hunger and unemployment. Not later than January
203 1, 2011, the commission shall report, in accordance with the provisions
204 of section 11-4a of the general statutes, its findings to the joint standing
205 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
206 relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies.

207 Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Commission on Children
208 shall coordinate information on youth leadership opportunities that
209 keep youth engaged in the community. The commission shall inform

210 the General Assembly and the public of such opportunities.

211 Sec. 12. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) No cause of action or liability
212 shall arise against the state, any of its agencies or subdivisions, or any
213 state official, employee or agent, for failure to comply with the
214 provisions of sections 1 to 9, inclusive, of this act.

215 Sec. 13. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social
216 Services shall submit a report on the policies and interventions
217 promoted pursuant to sections 2 and 3 of this act, subsection (a) of
218 section 4 of this act and sections 7 and 8 of this act. The report shall
219 include key outcome indicators and measures and set benchmarks for
220 evaluating progress in accomplishing the purposes of said sections.
221 The department shall submit the report on or before January 1, 2011, to
222 the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having
223 cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of
224 state agencies, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the
225 general statutes.

226 (b) The Department of Education shall submit a report on the
227 policies and interventions promoted pursuant to subsection (b) of
228 section 4 and section 6 of this act. The report shall include key outcome
229 indicators and measures and set benchmarks for evaluating progress
230 in accomplishing the purposes of said sections. The department shall
231 submit the report on or before January 1, 2011, to the joint standing
232 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
233 relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, in
234 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

235 (c) The Department of Public Health shall submit a report on the
236 policies and interventions promoted pursuant to section 9 of this act.
237 The report shall include key outcome indicators and measures and set
238 benchmarks for evaluating progress in accomplishing the purposes of
239 said section. The department shall submit the report on or before
240 January 1, 2011, to the joint standing committee of the General
241 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and

242 the budgets of state agencies, in accordance with the provisions of
243 section 11-4a of the general statutes.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2010</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 10	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 11	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 12	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 13	<i>from passage</i>	New section

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: See Below

Municipal Impact: See Below

Explanation

The bill is anticipated to result in various impacts described below. Under the bill these provisions are to be implemented within available appropriations and therefore will result in one of four outcomes: (1) the agencies will proceed with the required duties, and may require a deficiency appropriation; (2) the agencies will delay the implementation of the bill pending the approval of additional appropriations to meet these requirements; (3) the agencies will shift staff resources from other agency priorities, thereby impacting existing agency responsibilities and duties; or (4) the agencies will not be able to implement the bill.

Section 3 requires that any change in child care subsidy eligibility or program terms be effective not less than thirty days after public notice of such change. To the extent that this causes a change to go into effect later than it otherwise would have, this could result in an impact to the state. For example, enrollment to the program can currently be closed for certain participants at any time. Under this provision, the state would experience a cost associated with keeping the program open for those participants for at least thirty days after public notice.

Section 6 requires the Department of Education (SDE) to administer a child nutrition outreach program to increase participation in the federal School Breakfast Program, federal Summer Food Service Program, and the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program. SDE

would require minimal expenses to develop, print, and disseminate materials encouraging these programs, as the department currently conducts similar activities. To the extent that the outreach program encourages additional participation, municipalities could see an increase in federal funds. With the increase in federal funds Connecticut would be eligible to withhold a State Administrative Expenses (SAE) portion of approximately 1%. Additionally, SDE would require a part-time position to assist in the expansion of federal grants management, at a cost of approximately \$30, 000 annually, plus fringe benefits.¹

Section 7 requires DSS to maximize federal funding from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Fund and specifies certain areas that these funds are to be utilized.

Section 8 requires DSS to establish a procedure for permitting education and training as work activities for the Jobs First program. This procedure must be implemented when the state unemployment rate exceeds 8% for the preceding three months, and will remain in effect for at least six months even if the unemployment rate for subsequent quarters does not exceed 8%. This will result in increased costs as fewer families would leave the program due to not meeting work requirements. Although it is not known how many cases would be affected, each additional six months of benefits costs an average of \$2, 860 per case.

Section 9 requires the Department of Public Health (DPH) to seek to reduce the incidence of low birth weight infants. It is anticipated that no new services beyond those currently provided would be implemented by the agency as no new funding has been included within sHB 5018 (the Revised FY 11 Budget as favorably reported by

¹ The estimated non-pension fringe benefit rate as a percentage of payroll is 26.66% which includes health insurance, social security, Medicare, life insurance, and unemployment compensation. Fringe benefit costs for new positions do not include pension costs as new positions will not impact the state's pension contribution until FY 12 after the next scheduled actuarial valuation.

the Appropriations Committee) .

The bill allows DPH to recover costs of implementing the provisions of this section through funds available from the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund (THTF) and the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Family Emergency Fund (TANF) . It should be noted, however, that disbursement from the THTF must be per recommendation of its board of trustees (under CGS 4-28f) or otherwise directed by legislation. It is unclear whether activities under this section could be funded under TANF.

Section 13 requires the Departments of Social Services, Education, and Public Health to utilize benchmarks and performance measures to analyze the policies and interventions outlined in the bill. This requirement does not result in a fiscal impact.

The remaining sections of the bill are technical and/or have no fiscal impact.

House “A” strikes the language in the underlying bill and results in the impact described above.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 5360 (as amended by House "A")******AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN IN THE RECESSION.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill creates new state agency responsibilities, and reporting requirements intended to provide an emergency response to children affected by the recession (see BACKGROUND). The Department of Social Services (DSS) is the agency most affected, but the other state agencies that the bill gives new responsibilities are: the departments of Children and Families (DCF), Education (SDE), Labor (DOL), and Public Health (DPH). The added responsibilities are all to be achieved within available appropriations.

Among other things, the bill:

1. designates the state's Child Poverty and Prevention Council as the children in the recession leadership team to make recommendations for the state's emergency response to children affected by the recession;
2. requires DSS to develop a plan for comprehensive state services;
3. specifies how DSS can spend emergency funds received through the federal American Recovery and Reimbursement Act (ARRA);
4. makes attending a two- or four-year degree program an acceptable work activity for Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) participants when the unemployment rate is high;

5. prohibits DSS from changing eligibility criteria for the child care assistance program (Care4Kids) without 30 days advance notice;
6. increases state agency responsibilities for administering programs for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness;
7. calls for greater focus on reducing (a) the number of low birth-weight babies, (b) homeless children and families, and (c) food insecurity;
8. requires DSS, SDE, and DPH to submit reports to the Appropriations Committee that includes information on their progress in implementing the provisions of the bill they have been assigned; and
9. immunizes state agencies and officials from civil liability for actions undertaken in complying with the bill's requirements.

*House amendment A replaces the original bill. Among other things, it eliminates provisions that had a fiscal impact.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the provisions on food outreach which take effect July 1, 2010

§ 1 — LEADERSHIP TEAM

The bill designates the state's Child Poverty and Prevention Council as the state's children in the recession leadership team. It directs the team to work in consultation with government agencies to develop and promote, within available appropriations, policies, practices, and procedures that:

1. mitigate the long-term impact of the economic recession on children;
2. provide appropriate assistance and resources to families to minimize the number of children who enter poverty as a result of the recession; and

3. reduce human and fiscal costs of recessions, including foreclosures, child hunger, family violence, school failure, youth runaways, homelessness, and child abuse and neglect.

Composition and Meetings

The bill permits the council to establish a subcommittee to act on its behalf with respect to the activities listed above. The council or subcommittee must meet quarterly if the state DOL reports that the unemployment rate has been 8% or greater for the prior three months.

Accomplishing Its Goals

To accomplish its goals, the bill requires the council to use strategies to mitigate the impact of the recession on children, including:

1. resource information sharing and strategic planning to address an emergency response to children in the recession;
2. training pertinent personnel on the availability of services, access points, and interventions across agencies, including child trauma treatment;
3. developing linkages between job training and education programs and services;
4. developing and implementing efforts to coordinate outreach and increase and improve access to services, including establishing multiple enrollment sites where feasible;
5. reducing current response times for clients for safety net programs, including the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program, subsidized child care, heating and rental assistance, eviction prevention, free and reduced preschool meal programs, and the National School Lunch and other school federal nutrition programs;

6. identifying appropriate revisions to regulations and procedures to increase program access;
7. maximizing availability of targeted case management and intervention services;
8. assessing the unique needs of children of soldiers serving in, or returning from, war or other military service; and
9. maximizing federal funding opportunities.

Reporting

By January 1, 2011 the council must prepare a report on (1) its progress in implementing the bill's provisions and (2) other governmental actions to reduce the impact of the recession on children and families. The council must submit its report to the Appropriations, Children's, and Human Services committees.

§ 2 — COMPREHENSIVE STATE SERVICES PLAN

The bill requires DSS, in consultation with DCF, SDE, DOL, and DPH and within available appropriations, to promote efficiency, reduce costs and administrative error rates, and simplify application processes. To accomplish this, the department must, within available appropriations, develop a comprehensive plan that may include:

1. the development and promotion of a single, simplified, on-line application and enrollment process for DSS-administered programs that serve children and families;
2. use of the Internet to develop and increase access to on-line screening tools, benefit calculators, and on-line applications that facilitate prompt access to DSS-administered programs and information;
3. promotion of access to direct assistance with application and enrollment processes through community based organizations.

DSS must submit the plan to the Children's and Human Services

committees by January 31, 2011. It may consult with philanthropic organizations to finance and accomplish the plan's purposes.

Client-Friendly Applications and Notices of Programmatic Changes

The bill also requires DSS to develop a client-friendly application process that will not require applications to be re-submitted if a family applies for services and, not more than 30 days after the application was submitted, (1) the family experiences a change in circumstances that makes it eligible for services or (2) a program with closed intake that reopens within 30 days. In those situations, the applicant need not submit a new application.

The department must present its plan to legislative committees by January 31, 2011.

§ 7 — MAXIMIZING FEDERAL FUNDING IN TFA PROGRAM

The bill directs DSS to assist families facing unemployment, housing crises, increasing debt, homelessness, or other hardship by maximizing federal funding opportunities from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund created by the ARRA. That federal act creates both short-term benefits and subsidized employment funding categories.

The activities for which DSS can use the nonrecurrent, short-term benefit funds include:

1. mortgage assistance,
2. eviction relief,
3. car repairs,
4. work clothes,
5. domestic violence services,
6. home visitation services, and

7. on-the-job training.

Under the bill, the emergency fund's subsidized employment category may be used for purposes including youth employment programs and the alleviation of specific labor and state worker shortages where the jobs created will help families apply for state services.

DSS must work with the private sector, including philanthropies, businesses, and nonprofit agencies, and consortia of such groups, for eligible purposes and as third party participants to qualify for, access, and maximize federal funding from the emergency fund through donations, in-kind contributions, and training of subsidized workers.

§ 8 — MODIFYING TFA WORK REQUIREMENTS

The bill requires DSS, within 60 days and available appropriations, to the extent permitted by federal law, to establish and implement a procedure to modify the TFA program after the labor commissioner determines that the state unemployment rate is 8% or more for the preceding three months. (The state unemployment rates for December 2009 and January and February of 2010 were 8.9, 9.0 and 9.1%, respectively.)

When this occurs, the bill requires TFA's Jobs First program to allow and encourage poor parents to pursue higher education or training. It must approve, as acceptable work activities, attendance at a two- or four-year higher degree program.

Under the bill, the modification must remain in place for at least six months, even if the unemployment rate falls below 8% during that time. DSS may seek federal TANF emergency funds to pay for the modification.

§ 3 — CARE4KIDS

Under the bill, DSS must provide the public timely notice if it closes Care4kids intake or if program eligibility or status has been altered. No change, except opening the program or expanding eligibility, can be

implemented before the public has had 30 days notice of the change.

§ 4 — IMPEDING HOMELESSNESS

The bill requires DSS, in consultation with DCF and SDE, and within available appropriations to impede homelessness.

It must:

1. allocate existing funding to ensure that homeless shelters accept intact families or help them find adequate alternative shelter that enables them to stay together;
2. review program eligibility requirements and policies to ensure that an unaccompanied homeless child (for example, a runaway) has access, to the fullest extent practicable, to critical services that he or she might otherwise have been prevented from receiving because of age or lack of a parent or guardian;
3. work, in accordance with state and federal law, to seek relief from income garnishment orders through the appropriate judicial authority if it is deemed to be in the best interest of children and families; and
4. require SDE, in collaboration with appropriate departments, to fully use the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Act to protect homeless children from school failure and dropping out and improve their access to higher education opportunities;

§§ 5 & 6 — REDUCING HUNGER

DSS

The bill requires SDE, DPH and DSS to collaborate to decrease recession-related hunger by, within available appropriations, coordinating statewide access, information, and outreach, and promoting (1) cross-referrals and co-location of entry points and (2) application processes for SNAP, child nutrition programs, and WIC to increase federal reimbursements.

SDE

The bill requires SDE to administer a child nutrition outreach program to (1) increase participation in the federal School Breakfast, Summer Food Service, and Child and Adult Care Food programs and (2) secure federal reimbursement for the programs.

The outreach program must:

1. encourage schools to participate in the federal School Breakfast program and use innovative ways to serve breakfast in classrooms or elsewhere after school starts, rather than only in the cafeteria before school;
2. apply for state grants from the in-classroom breakfast program;
3. encourage local and regional school districts to (a) sponsor Summer Food Service Program sites, (b) recruit others to sponsor sites, and (c) make grants to sponsors to help them increase children's participation;
4. encourage day care centers to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; and
5. publicize the availability of federally funded child nutrition programs throughout the state.

§ 9 — LOW BIRTH-WEIGHT BABIES

The bill requires DPH, within available appropriations and in consultation with SDE and DSS, to try to reduce the incidence of low birth-weight infants resulting from the recession and the state's costs associated with unnecessary hospitalizations. It must do this by maximizing WIC and Medicaid enrollment, targeting tobacco cessation programs at pregnant women, and promoting the use of the centering pregnancy model of prenatal care.

DPH may recover the costs of implementing these programs through funds available from the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund and

the TANF emergency fund.

§10—RESEARCH

The bill requires the Commission on Children to consult with the private sector to research the viability of enacting a state children and the recession fund that would provide funds and low-interest loans to families facing short-term crisis in housing, utilities, hunger, and unemployment.

The commission must report its findings to the Appropriations Committee by January 12, 2011.

11—YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The bill also requires the Commission on Children to coordinate information on youth leadership opportunities that keep youth engaged in the community. The commission must inform the legislature and public of such opportunities.

§ 13 — RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS

The bill requires SDE, DPH, and DSS to each submit results-based accountability reports detailing the policies and interventions it promoted as required by the bill's terms. The departments' report must include key outcome indicators and measures and set benchmarks for evaluation progress.

The reports must be submitted to the Appropriations Committee by January 1, 2011.

BACKGROUND

Economic Recession

Although there is no universal definition of economic recession, the widely accepted National Bureau of Economic Research definition is that a recession occurs when gross domestic product has dropped for two consecutive quarters. Under this definition, the United States is not currently in recession. But, high unemployment rates are also a strong indicator of a recession. According to the Bureau of Labor

Statistics, Connecticut's unemployment rate stood at 9.1% in February 2010, up from 9.0% and 8.8%, respectively, in the two preceding months.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Select Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference

Yea 9 Nay 3 (03/09/2010)

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 13 Nay 6 (03/18/2010)